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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [TBIO](#) [UY](#)  
SUBJECT: URUGUAY: FM LAUDS BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP,  
PRESIDENT MAY MISS SUMMIT OF AMERICAS

REF: A. STATE 8206  
[1](#)B. 08 MVD 0695 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES ROBIN MATTHEWMAN, FOR REASON 1.4 (B)

Summary  
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[1](#)1. (C) Getting to know officials in the new U.S. administration and helping them understand Uruguay's excellent relationship with the U.S. is a priority for President Vazquez during his last year in office, Foreign Minister Gonzalo Fernandez told the Charge February 6. Complicating that challenge is Vazquez's likely absence from April's Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago, as he will need to be in Montevideo to welcome UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to a GOU-sponsored conference on peacekeeping. Fernandez expressed a hope that President Vazquez could instead travel to Washington sometime after the Summit to meet with President Obama, although Fernandez acknowledged that such a meeting would be difficult to arrange so early in the Administration. The Charge took the opportunity to inform Fernandez of a number of promising areas of cooperation, from joint Antarctic and cancer research to biofuels and disaster relief. End Summary.

Uruguay and the Summit  
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[1](#)2. (C) Charge Matthewman called on FM Fernandez February 6 to deliver messages of greeting from President Obama to President Vazquez and from the Secretary to Fernandez, and to discuss Uruguay's participation in the April 17-19 Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago. Fernandez began the meeting by remarking that he and President Vazquez had recently been strategizing about the best way to inform Obama administration officials about Uruguay's excellent relationship with the U.S. When the Charge noted that the Summit would be a superb opportunity, Fernandez agreed but explained that Vazquez was likely unable to attend, owing to pre-existing obligations. As of now, the GOU is planning to send Vice President Nin Novoa to head Uruguay's Summit delegation.

[1](#)3. (C) Those obligations include a long-planned international conference on peacekeeping that is to take place in Montevideo April 20-21. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon is scheduled to give the keynote address at the conference, and President Vazquez insists on being in Uruguay to greet and host him, according to Fernandez. Fernandez said the peacekeeping conference is especially important because it

should give Uruguay worldwide exposure as a serious country, and also keep foreign policy elevated as a GOU priority as Uruguay dives headfirst into election season. In addition, Vazquez is scheduled to travel to Costa Rica April 23-24, and from there to Russia to meet an obligation that he has been putting off for over a year, Fernandez said.

¶4. (C) Fernandez mentioned that Vazquez would be very interested in traveling to the U.S. in late April or early May, if a meeting with President Obama could be arranged. The Charge promised to look into it, but highlighted the difficulties involved. Fernandez acknowledged the challenge in trying to organize a meeting with President Obama this year outside the context of the Summit. He ended the discussion by saying: "Even if President Vazquez is unable to go to Trinidad, nothing will have changed. We need to keep the relationship good."

Moving Forward: Focus on Trade  
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¶5. (C) Fernandez told the Charge that President Vazquez and he are "preoccupied" with finding the best way forward in the bilateral relationship, particularly with regard to trade. He said the Vazquez administration is committed to working until its last day, in March 2010, but presidential elections in October 2009 probably mark the end of the administration's ability to push any new initiatives. With that in mind, Fernandez continued, any forward movement in trade should occur by the end of October. The Charge recommended that we continue our work on an e-Commerce protocol and other commercial discussions under our bilateral Trade and

Investment Framework Agreement. Fernandez agreed, and indicated that he would shortly touch base with the bilateral trade official who has been working the issue.

Highlighting Bilateral Cooperation  
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¶6. (SBU) The Charge also outlined the progress we are making on a number of other issues. Our Antarctic cooperation is flourishing, with three U.S. scientists, including Dr. Chuck Kennicutt, head of the Scientific Committee for Antarctic Research (SCAR), traveling this month for research on Uruguay's Artigas Base. Our National Cancer Institute selected Uruguay as one of five Latin American countries -- the others were Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, and Chile -- with which to begin research partnerships, and a first group of Uruguayan doctors is traveling to the U.S. for that program in March. We are following up a bilateral alternative energy MOU signed in 2008 by working with the GOU and with a private U.S. company (Weyerhouser - 2008 finalist for the Secretary's award for corporate social responsibility) to build GOU awareness of Uruguay's immense cellulosic biofuels potential, the realization of which could improve hemispheric energy security while reducing Uruguay's output of greenhouse gases. And we have been helping Uruguay deal with the effects of a devastating drought. USSOUTHCOM, using Humanitarian Assistance Program funds, donated four helicopter-borne Bambi Buckets to help the GOU fight forest fires. That donation, and saturation media coverage of the buckets' use by the Uruguayan Air Force, generated an enormous amount of good will locally. Fernandez expressed satisfaction at the extent of new bilateral initiatives.

Comment  
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¶7. (C) Our engagement with this Uruguayan leftist administration has been a success. We will continue to expand our collaboration in the scientific, economic, energy, disaster relief, and peacekeeping realms to reinforce those gains. With the clock ticking on President Vazquez's term in office, Fernandez also appears focused on the big-picture aspects of the bilateral relationship, growing animated as he considered how to get the presidents together or move forward on trade. End Comment.

